



## CLARK COUNTY HOUSING OPTIONS STUDY AND ACTION PLAN

### Project Advisory Group Meeting #2

February 23, 2021 – 3PM to 5PM

### NOTES

PAG Members: Stephen Abramson, Ron Barca, John Blom, Sierk Braam, Kate Budd, Victor Caesar, Carol Collier, Nancy Dong, Bryant Enge, Julia Getchell, Marc Maggiora, Martha Maier, Christina Marneris, Heidi Rosenberg, Eric Scott, Bryan Snodgrass, Dan Whiteley, Phil Wuest.

County Staff: Jacqueline Kamp, Jenna Kay, Oliver Orjiako, Jose Alvarez, Colete Anderson.

Consultants: Steve Faust, Tyler Bump (ECONorthwest).

Guests: Bill Cline, CASA, Les MacDonald, David Hudson, Bob Pool, Jake Heffernan, Kathy Neary, Cheryl Burkey, Curtis Ambrose, Josie Hyde, Randy

#### **Project Announcements**

Steve Faust welcomed PAG members and guests to the second PAG meeting and reviewed the agenda. Jacqui Kamp made several announcements in follow-up to the first meeting. The Chat function is now enabled for PAG meetings and County staff is looking into other tools to allow communication between meetings. Several members requested a PAG roster with contact information. Please let Jacqui know if you do not want to be included on the roster or have your contact information included. Housing action plans from other jurisdictions have been posted to the project website for your reference. If you haven't done so already, please take the Open Government Training lessons to learn about the public records and open meetings info to understand the overall parameters of government decision making processes.

#### **Project Framing**

In response to some discussion at the first PAG meeting, Jacqui presented information to frame the Housing Options Study and Action Plan process. The first topic in this presentation was the project purpose, potential strategies/recommendations, and implementation considerations. The second topic was an overview of the County's established vision, policies, and regulations related to housing. Jacqui also introduced members of the Community Planning team to help answer questions about the County's policies and codes. Oliver Orjiako is the Director of Community Planning. He has been through multiple updates to the Comprehensive Plan. Colete Anderson is the Program Manager and was the project manager for the Highway 99 Subarea Plan and form-based code work. Jose Alvarez started in current planning and has now been in long range planning for many years. Jose is well-versed with the County processes, codes, and policies.



PAG members had the following questions and comments in response to the presentation (staff responses are noted in *italics*.)

- Where are we in implementation of the 20-year plan and how is the progress tracked?
- *The County hasn't looked at or overhauled the county code in a long time, so this is a good opportunity to see if there are changes that can be made to the code to implement the vision, policies and goals of the plan.*
- Regarding county policies and code. The Building Industry Association of Clark County is concerned about adding density in rural areas. Has the Council been reviewing those decisions as things change (e.g. COVID)? Are our plans keeping up with the times?
- *We make small changes to the Comprehensive Plan annually. Larger changes happen every eight years and address population and employment forecasts and what the county and cities need to do to accommodate that growth.*
- *It is too early to know what the impact of COVID will be on housing and how we live. Also, the county is constrained based on the goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA should plan for more growth to our core in the urban areas where services are. That means it's up to Council to determine how to plan for the population we anticipate in Clark County in the next 20 years. It is the Council's role in coordination with city partners to determine how to plan for that growth. We have to make decisions about how much growth to put in urban and unincorporated areas and how much growth to put in rural areas and if we have the capacity. We have to balance that with available infrastructure and limited rural services, like public water, sewer, and the road system. The County plans with seven cities and the City of Woodland.*
- Are we meeting the intent of the Comprehensive Plan or are we out of compliance?
- *We are meeting the intent of the Plan. The Plan is in compliance with GMA. We are required by the state legislature to review every 5-8 years to see how well we are developing and if we are meeting policy and density prescriptions and assumptions in the 20-year plan (Buildable Lands Report). Each time we have to report to the state before the next plan update so we can make adjustments if we are not meeting the goals set by County Council. If we are not meeting those countywide planning policies (e.g. density), we are required to take "reasonable measures" to achieve the goal, such as rezoning some areas, allowing accessory dwelling units, providing for cottage housing, allowing for manufactured housing, allowing for tiny homes. Jacqui talked about allowing duplexes on corner lots. The City of Vancouver allows apartments along transportation corridors and in commercial zones.*
- If we are talking about affordable housing, when will we discuss factors that are impacting development costs, such as impact fees and other development requirements? Another factor is the loss of available aggregate because the existing quarry pit will be exhausted soon. Also, how do available lands impact affordability? It's great to talk about policies and codes, but what about other factors?
- *Next month, we will present information on another piece of the puzzle – codes, policies and development constraints. Elizabeth Decker from JET Planning will be giving that update and spoke with the development community during the stakeholder interview process.*
- *The County also is in the process of conducting a buildable lands update under guidelines of the Department of Commerce. An advisory group is making recommendations to the vacant buildable lands model and we will have a work session with Council next Wednesday to discuss*

*the advisory group's recommendations. We have to have a report ready by end of June 2021. We are happy to provide updates on those recommendations.*

- The supply and demand of aggregate resources is not something this project will address. There are hard costs and soft costs related to housing. Hard costs include labor and land. Soft costs could be system development charges, the cost to hook up infrastructure, impact fees, the permitting process. Communities have the opportunity to adjust soft costs if they so choose. We have no say over the hard costs. Some say that expanding the UGB will provide affordable housing. Other studies show that is not the case. We have to look at the demand in this desirable area. That has some impact on the type of houses that are being built, what people are looking for, even during the pandemic the demand for housing is significant. We also have to consider the median income of the people who live here. What can someone living in Clark County afford and are we providing that price range of homes?*
- Is there a 5-year report on the Growth Management Plan that people can review?*
- Periodic update happens every eight years. We look at the entire comprehensive plan and designations and the population forecast. That process happens through a public process over two years. Public gets involved. (Information about the county's Buildable Lands Program was provided to the group via email in a follow up from the meeting.)*
- Is there an ideal density that we are seeking and is it complementary to what the cities are seeking? Codes to allow other housing types (townhomes, ADUs, cottages) is a concession to the status quo of a single-family unit on single family plot of land. Is that the ideal setup for this area and what is the ideal density and how do we make updates to get more density understanding that this is a desirable area?*
- When the first Comprehensive Plan was developed in 1994, there was a countywide policy that no more than 60% of new development would be single-family type and 40% would be other types, for each of the UGAs. The 60/40 threshold was hard to meet, so the cities and county modified it to 75% single family and 25% other housing types. In addition to that 75/25 split, cities agreed to a density in the Vancouver UGA of 8 units per acre and 6 units per acre for the smaller cities. La Center is 4 units per acre. The Town of Yacolt has no set density because there is no sewer. Vancouver is the largest city and has urban services and transit and a downtown to support 8 units per acre. Part of this project is to determine if we currently have the right zoning. In the urban area where you have zoning starts with 5,000 sf lots and then outside the city limits you have 6,000, 7,500, 10,000 and 20,000 sf single family lots. Where is there a gap that we are not fulfilling? Are there opportunities where changes can be made to address unmet needs?*
- Chat: some ideas: reduce impact fees, suspend property tax increases, reduce permit fees for homeowners who wish to build ADUs (increase infill), allow rural areas to build ADUs (with septic tanks). Review and evaluate the Portland Infill Project. Allow cottage clusters of small houses / ADUs in conjunction with multiplex buildings.*
- Chat: Here's a great tool offered by the AARP--A Handbook for Improved Neighborhoods. Small-scale land use and zoning changes can help communities revitalize and thrive. Learn how this free publication for local leaders and community advocates. By AARP and the Congress for the New Urbanism: <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/tool-kits-resources/info-2020/enabling-better-places.html>*
- The Comprehensive Plan manages density against sprawl to create a community that is livable and desirable. We are probably meeting all of the themes Jacqui identified. Are we capable of mitigating the cost of building is going to be questionable based on hard costs? Are we meeting*

the intent of being able to shelter people and make it affordable for them to be in Clark County? If density is part of that package, then it has to be part of the mix. How do we incentivize and create market-driven opportunities for people who want to invest in sheltering complexes that help us genuinely commit to the people that are in the county and find a way for them with a livable wage and affordable housing? The goal for this group should be to put proactive policies that helps with the problem we're having with lack of shelter.

- Chat: We need to find incentives that facilitate this strategy being implementable. Playing off the Multi-family Tax Abatement tool is one way we can encourage a broader investment in any efforts to expand affordable housing--regardless of the size of the addition. Perhaps more for the less costly units.
- Chat: The multi-family tax abatement is not available to counties, only to cities. There was effort to get that changed over the last two years but it will require legislative action.
- Chat: Working in the Urban Growth zone should be subject to the ultimate urban jurisdiction's policies.
- Chat: That was the argument the county tried to make.
- Chat: No reason an elderly homeowner with excess land availability couldn't do an ADU and get a tax abatement--contingent that they certify it is being used to house a low-income resident.

### **Housing Inventory and Analysis**

Tyler Bump from ECONorthwest gave a presentation on their analysis of housing supply, demand, needs, and preferences throughout the study area to provide context for evaluating potential actions. PAG members had the following questions and comments in response to the presentation (staff responses are noted in *italics*.)

#### Who Lives in the Study Area?

- On growth outside of this area, was that mostly in cities or was there anything notable other than this growth area? *We focused on just this area, but growth is pretty widespread throughout the county.*
- Where are folks coming from? *We did not look into that. As part of the Portland metropolitan region, in-migration in the area is characteristic of what we are seeing in the Portland region as a whole. There is some interstate migration – people from Puget Sound and western Washington that are moving to Clark County. Also, people from California and Oregon. Surprisingly, also people moving here from Colorado, Montana and some other high in-migration areas.*
- Chat: do we have any current information/data about the economic and housing changes of residents wrought by the pandemic in 2020? *It's too soon to come to conclusions about the pandemic. The data for 2020 is just now becoming available. The housing market fared better than anticipated at the beginning of the pandemic. The housing market, especially on the ownership side, remained strong throughout the region.*

#### What are employment conditions?

- Did you look at employment in Washington versus throughout the rest of the urban area?
- *Of the 66,000 people leaving the Vancouver UGA for work, we did not look to see who is staying in Clark County. Across-state commute data is very difficult because of the number of economic development and workforce departments that report. This is 2018 data. People are starting to commute again.*

### What are housing conditions in the study area?

- No questions or comments.

### How much housing should the County be planning for?

- Chat: What's the difference between a townhome and multifamily?
- *Chat: County Code defines townhomes: "Townhouse dwelling" means a form of attached single-family housing where two (2) or more dwelling units share one (1) or more common walls with other dwelling units, and with each dwelling occupying an individually owned parcel of land.*
- *Chat: Clark County Code defines: "Multiple-family dwelling" means a building or portion thereof designed or used as a residence by three (3) or more families, and containing three (3) or more dwelling units.*
- Chat: There are many opportunities for lot-based infill--over 60K units.
- Chat: According to county assessor data, it looks like new homes are a lot bigger. Homes built in the SFR zones from 2016 in the study area look to have a median size of 2,350 sf.
- As land becomes more expensive, it is easier for builders to maintain profitability by building larger homes. It allows them to spread costs over more square footage, keeping the dollars per square foot from going up too much and causing appraisal issues.
- Strategies have to be focused on the lower income available housing.
- Unfortunately, the big house trend isn't conducive for affordable housing. We need smaller houses, more of them, using existing lots. These new builds have lots of living sf, but little yards and no possibility to add density.
- That gets us to the question of do we have the right zoning and development code to be conducive to the type of housing we need (both new development and redevelopment)?
- Regarding the information on study area future housing needs by income, the largest need is for single family homes. What is that percentage compared to single family homes now?
- *The policy discussion is about what do these numbers mean for land use and development allowances. Do we assume that every household in the 120% category (household income as a percent of area median income) needs a single family detached house and how many will be homeowners giving the trends in the aging population? Overall, we want to make sure there is enough housing in each of these income categories. If there is not enough housing for the higher income households, they will put pressure on lower income households and create additional cost burdening and price people out of the UGA. We need to think about need by income category and make sure there is enough market capacity and land use allowances for the preference and type of housing on market rate side and programming support and incentives for lower income household needs.*
- If we average 885 units per year until 2035, is that multifamily or only single family detached? *That is all units, so we need to think about what that means for people who prefer or need rental housing at different levels and ownership at different income levels. This is specifically for the unincorporated Vancouver UGA.*
- My concern is that the information on that slide could be misleading. People may think that we need to focus on the high bar. How much of naturally occurring housing supply is going to fit that need compared to other, smaller income categories that add up to a greater number than the 120% AMI category? Most housing is going to be affordable at that higher income point. What are the strategies to make sure that we are providing housing for the next three

categories (50-80%, 80-120%, 100-120%) that could afford market rent or to purchase at market rate of the right type of housing was available? That is a much tougher policy question.

- *The lower you go down on the income categories, the harder it is to get that housing built within the incentives, funding, and programs that most communities have. From a land use policy perspective, how can we support nonsubsidized housing mostly at the 80% and above category, and how to optimize financial resources for and programmatic funding for regulated housing at 80% and below.*
- If we focus on the 120% or above category, we will not resolve the problem. We need to focus on how to provide affordable housing and sheltering for people with limited household incomes. That will take some pressure off of gentrification and the need to look at displacing people in the higher income bracket. How much of that number of housing units is already covered in city jurisdictions? That is the only bracket being addressed. We need to make housing viable at lower brackets.
- Pleasantly surprised to see 13% of units in the study area are multifamily. Does that include senior housing?
- *Yes, if it is in a multifamily category. It's about the building type, not the programming.*
- How much market rate versus senior or regulated affordable housing?
- *Senior housing data is in report. We can find that data for senior housing, but maybe not for regulated affordable housing.*
- What does current capacity in the study area tell us? There is a little over 20,000 units of capacity at this time. *That is in the current vacant buildable lands model.* How many units in are there in the study area? However many units there are, there are a small number of policy choices to recommend, such as ADUs and duplexes on corner lots. It's in those 20,000 units where our recommendations will have the most impact.
- The UGA is not an island of itself. When we look at strategies, they have to be couched within the capacity of adjoining agencies and settings. Create strategy that fits for whole county and how it gets integrated with other jurisdictions. Where is capacity to fill the need?
- The balance in raw numbers between 120% and others is not as extreme as some have assumed. All of the other categories together are about 7,000 units. What is the cost in infrastructure, land, bus routes, and other resources to provide for the needs for the lower income categories versus the higher income categories?
- Chat: The 120% income category will take care of itself.
- Some of the 2020 or 2019 data indicates a significant amount of development in the 10,000 sf lots. How does that information correlate with the chart on housing size? Does it mean that houses being built are on 10,000 sf lots? If that is the case, are they building more smaller homes between 1,200 and 1,900 sf? Maybe that is a result of the zoning.
- *We have a lot more detailed information on urban and rural lots and Comprehensive Plan designations than is in the report, so we can include more information in the updated version. Clarification that on the lot size, that is not lots built in 2020, it is the year of the source of the data, not the year they were built. We can cross tabulate lot size by year built and building size.*
- *I could see some correlation between housing size and cost.*
- *As of 2020, there were 60,093 units in the study area.*
- I agree that our focus should be the categories under 120%, but it is important to remember that we are dealing with a continuum of housing types and people that move between these income categories potentially due to life cycle and if we ignore one area of the market it could

impact how the other areas work. It's important to understand how the supply at 120% is being met.

- Chat: Yes. Look at the urban infill with demolition of 'affordable' existing housing for much higher value structures.
- There was a lot of information and data in today's presentations. I encourage everyone to check the portal for meeting information so we can focus on what's most important.
- Chat: An off-line workshop session to dive deep on some of the data may be a valuable exercise. I would be willing to participate.

#### **Public Comment**

No public comment.

#### **Next Steps**

The next PAG meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> where Elizabeth Decker from JET Planning will review information on housing policies, zoning, and regulatory review. Meeting #4 is on April 27<sup>th</sup> where we will start to talk about what all of this data means. We also will be conducting briefings with Planning Commission and County Council as we progress.

#### **Adjourn**